



234 N. Central Avenue
Suite 6400
Phoenix, AZ 85004-2187
Phone: 602-506-2930
Fax: 602-506-4692
www.maricopa.gov/parks

Date: October 10, 2006

To: Parks and Recreation Department Commissioners

From: William C. Scalzo, Director 

Re: **Director's Summary of Current Events**

Listed below are issues that the department has been involved with since the September Director's Summary.

Market Studies Underway

At long last, some of the market studies are finally being completed by County Employee Compensation. Phase I of the Administrative Market Study is just being completed with recommendations received by Employee Compensation. We are not completely satisfied with all of the ranges, however, we have concurred with the implementation. At this time we are reviewing the financials with the Budget office to ensure that we can provide funding from our own revenue sources, where appropriate and also receive increases from the General Fund as necessary. Phase I covered most of the administrative positions in the department, to include the Regional Superintendents and Park Supervisors.

Phase II of the study will include a few financial and human resource positions in our department. The General Maintenance Study is also underway, which will include the Park Maintenance Workers, Trails Technicians, and Navigational Aid positions at the Lake. This is a critical part of the study that we have been waiting for for some time. They are indicating they will implement by calendar year end.

Superintendent Report

Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area (SCRCA): John Gunn, Park Supervisor, completed a presentation for the Arizona Parks and Recreation Association regarding the fire dynamics that are occurring in the Sonoran desert.

Spur Cross staff continues to coordinate with other agencies to bring the 7-Springs water diversion issue toward a resolution; coordinating with staff of the Tonto National Forest to tap in to their expertise in dealing with a significant noxious weed infestation (Star Thistle) that is occurring on the Conservation Area; and continuing to deter adjacent landowners from trespassing across the corner of Spur Cross to access their properties.

Eleven Ranger guided hikes were offered with Stargazing and Full Moon hikes being the most popular. Staff is developing new interpretive hikes for a Family Treasure Hunt & Geocaching.

Usery Mountain Regional Park: With the coolest September on record for the last ten years, Usery Park saw an increased attendance in day-use, weekend camping, and annual pass sales.

The hot new program at Usery is Digital Desert Photography. This unique program designed by our very own Interpretive Ranger and our park host (working author with a new book coming out on digital photography). This new program brought 30 new participants into the park that had never been to the park. After the shutters were done clicking, the group was so excited that they decided to form a Usery "Flickr" group so they could share the photos with each other.
<http://www.flickr.com/groups/usery>.

Cave Creek Regional Park: Mark Lansing, Interpretive Ranger from White Tank Mountain Regional Park has been transferred to Cave Creek. Mark has accepted the transfer and will be the acting supervisor for Cave Creek Regional Park until the recruiting process is completed. Mark's expertise, experience and long tenure with the department make him a good fit and we know he will do a fine job.

Staff has identified and explained a field improvement project for an Eagle Scout candidate. If you don't have info on the project, take this sentence out.

Adobe Dam Regional Park: Staff has coordinated the installation of a security gate for the 43rd Avenue entrance into the back loop which should greatly reduce criminal dumping in the Adobe Dam area.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park: McDowell Mountain Regional Park completed the water feature at the Pemberton Ranch site on the park on Saturday, September 16th. Ten boy scouts, three parents and the Park Supervisor installed the pieces necessary to harness water seeping from the Pemberton Ranch well which was dug in 1917.

On September 8th, McDowell held a program titled, "Friday Night Flights: We've gone Batty." This new program brought Nancy Renison, a biologist with the Arizona Game and Fish Department, on a bat walk, talk and listen experience at McDowell Mountain Regional Park. Nancy brought a live bat so participants could get up close with one of these fantastic creatures. This family walk was fun and educational.

During the hot summer months, McDowell Mountain Regional Park offered programs in the Visitor Center with "Your Venomous Neighbors." This is a popular program with families because the environment is air conditioned and safe for the youngest park visitors. It provides an opportunity to meet some of these creatures live and in person.

San Tan Mountain Regional Park: Nathan Martens Arizona Memorial had its ground breaking with approximately 50 participants in attendance. The dedication ceremony is planned for Veteran's Day on November 11th, with all the military honors; F-16 missing-man formation, color-guard, parade, and military dignitaries.

The Friends of San Tan Park will be breaking ground on their fall project with the construction of a tortoise habitat within the contact station compound. The habitat is being modeled after the habitat at the South Mountain Park Preserve.

Desert Outdoor Center: Sarah Steele is our newest Interpretive Ranger and comes to County Parks from the World Wildlife Zoo, where she worked as an educator and animal curator. She will be a big asset at the DOC in capacities of teaching and curating our popular animal exhibit.

DOC hosted the State Parks Board meeting and gave selected members of the Board a tour of our facilities. Particular key interests were seeing the boat dock and solar thermal HVAC system.

Estrella Mountain Regional Park: El Rio Project is moving forward nicely. Draft Memo of Understanding is in the process of being finalized by Maricopa County Parks, Maricopa County Flood District, Town of Buckeye, City of Avondale, and the City of Goodyear. This agreement sets forth the continued commitment to the future of the El Rio Project.

White Tank Mountain Regional Park: White Tank staff members have been working hard to gear up for the season ahead. Activity on the trails, in the visitor center and campground has already increased.

The Temporary Contact Station was put in place ¼ mile into the park on September 28, 2006 and is expected to be open for business very soon. (Call and see if it is open now)

White Tank Park welcomes Interpretive Ranger Bill Talboys. White Tank thanks Mark Lansing for all his good work and sends well wishes to him at Cave Creek.

The new contact station at the park entry has water, phone and power cables under the ground set and ready for the new lanes to be made and the concrete pad to be poured.

The Ramada Picnic Area #7 face lift continues with all three ramadas receiving fresh paint. Restroom # 5 is fully repaired after damage done by a vehicle and driver in training. We now have a full sweep of new and reconditioned restrooms at Areas 4, 5 and 6.

Contract Updates

Lake Pleasant Regional Park: Public comment to the Environmental Assessment was received by the Bureau of Reclamation; Parks and Lake Pleasant Marina Partners were given an opportunity to rebut scoping comments made. Due to public concern for safety on the lake and concern for numbers of recreational users of the Lake, on September 22, 2006 BOR informed Parks that it was going to reinforce the original document to eliminate as many public concerns as possible; again release the document for public review and comment; review comments submitted by the public; and make a decision as to the issuing of Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). Approximate timeline for the final decision would be the first of the year (2007). Based upon a favorable finding, the permitting process could continue. Unfortunately, this may result in possible delays in Park revenue and delays in opening of the new marina for up to one (1) year. Maricopa County and the City of Peoria continue to finalize an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) that outlines responsibilities in regards to planning and zoning; public safety and emergency response; and general provisions, e.g. term. Upon finalization, the IGA will be presented to the City of Peoria and the Board of Supervisors for approval. Completion of the IGA is a critical step in the review and permitting process which is on-going.

Adobe Dam Regional Park: Two (2) bids were accepted for selection of an Aquatic Appraiser and a selection was made. Upon acceptance of the Agreement, the Appraiser will have six (6) weeks to determine the Fair Market Value of non-real estate assets at Waterworld Safari. This Fair Market Value will then become a part of a new Request for Proposal which will be the mechanism for selection of a concessionaire to be effective October 1, 2008. The present Agreement terminates at this time and there are no renewal options.

A mandatory Pre-Proposal Conference was completed September 14, 2006 with Proposals due October 19, 2006. Twelve interested Parties were present.

Estrella Mountain Regional Park: Sprint is currently conducting on-site surveys of the proposed cell-tower site at Estrella Mountain Regional Park. If the site is satisfactory, a formal Use Management Agreement will be negotiated.

Usery Mountain Regional Park: Discussions continue regarding installation of a cell tower by Verizon at Usery Mountain Regional Park.

Grant Updates

Lake Pleasant Regional Park - The BOS approved the Collection Agreement from Arizona Game & Fish for the purchase of new dive gear equipment. We are receiving these funds from the Arizona Game & Fish Grant Pool Fund.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park - Work has begun on the Pemberton Ranch "Windmill" project for the fiberglass water trough project for wildlife use. Volunteer work will be provided by the Boy Scouts. Completion is expected within a few weeks.

Usery Mountain Regional Park - All bids have been received for the wildlife viewing project. This project will include a 15 x 15 x 2 ft deep pond with a circulating pump for top minnow and pupfish, native aquatic plants and landscaping for site-sensitive viewing areas designed for birders and wildlife enthusiasts.

Administration - The Grant Coordinator attended the first Game & Fish Heritage Fund Grant workshop of the new grant cycle in September. Arizona State Parks will conduct The State Lake Improvement Fund and Historic Preservation Heritage Fund workshops in October so we are currently working with Park Supervisors and Interpretive Rangers on new projects for the coming year.

Coming and Going in Human Resources

We recently had three positions filled and those new employees have started. Brandon Cunningham is the new Trades Specialist - Welder with the Trails/Construction Crew, Sarah Steele is the new Interpretive Ranger at the DOC and Laurene Muro is the new Accountant/Procurement Specialist at Parks Headquarters.

We are currently recruiting for the following positions; Contact Station Assistant (Temporary) at Lake Pleasant, Park Maintenance Worker at Lake Pleasant, Park Maintenance Worker at San Tan and Trades Specialist - Electrician with the Trails/Construction Crew. Interviews were held on October 4 for Park Maintenance Worker at Usery.